

Personal tools



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Douglas J. Feith (born July 16, 1953) served as the **Under Secretary of Defense for Policy** for **United States President George W. Bush** from July 2001 until August 2005. His official responsibilities included the formulation of defense planning guidance and forces policy, **United States Department of Defense** (DoD) relations with foreign countries, and DoD's role in **U.S. Government** interagency policymaking. Upon his resignation, Feith joined the faculty of the **Edmund A. Walsh School of Foreign Service** at **Georgetown University**, as a **Professor and Distinguished Practitioner in National Security Policy** for a two year contract.^[1] Feith is the Director of the Center for National Security Strategies and a Senior Fellow at the **Hudson Institute**, a conservative public policy **think-tank**.^[2]

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Under Secretary of Defense for Policy

In office
2001–2005

President George W. Bush
Preceded by Walter B. Slocombe
Succeeded by Eric S. Edelman

Personal details

Born July 16, 1953 (age 60)
Nationality American
Alma mater Harvard University
Georgetown University Law Center
Religion Jewish

Personal [edit]

Feith was born in [Philadelphia, Pennsylvania](#). He was one of three siblings born to Rose and [Dalck Feith](#). His father, Dalck, was a member of the [Betar](#), a [Revisionist Zionist](#) youth organization, in [Poland](#), and a [Holocaust](#) survivor who lost his parents and seven siblings in the [Nazi concentration camps](#). Dalck came to the United States during [World War II](#), and became a businessman, a [philanthropist](#), and a donor to the [Republican party](#).^[3]

Feith grew up in [Elkins Park](#), part of [Cheltenham Township](#), a [Philadelphia](#) suburb. He attended [Philadelphia's Central High School](#), and later attended [Harvard University](#), where he obtained his undergraduate degree and graduated *magna cum laude* in 1975. He continued on to the [Georgetown University Law Center](#), receiving his *J.D. magna cum laude* in 1978. After graduation, he worked for three years as an attorney with the law firm [Fried, Frank, Harris, Shriver & Jacobson LLP](#).

Career [\[edit\]](#)

Work as a Democrat [\[edit\]](#)

Feith worked on the staff of Senator [Henry M. Jackson](#) in 1975^[4] before going on to work on [Elmo Zumwalt](#)'s primary challenge to segregationalist conservative Democratic Senator [Harry Byrd, Jr.](#)^[5]

Reagan Administration [\[edit\]](#)

At Harvard, Feith had studied under Professor Richard Pipes, who joined the [Reagan administration's National Security Council](#) in 1981 to help carry out a private intelligence project called [Team B](#) that Pipes and his students had conceived.^[6] Feith joined the NSC as a Middle East specialist that same year, working under Pipes.

He transferred from the NSC Staff to Pentagon in 1982 to work as Special Counsel for [Richard Perle](#), who was then serving as Assistant Secretary to the [United States Secretary of Defense](#). [Secretary of Defense Caspar Weinberger](#) promoted Feith in 1984 to Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Negotiations Policy and, when Feith left the Pentagon in 1986, Weinberger gave him the highest Defense Department civilian award, the Distinguished Public Service medal.

During his time in the Pentagon in the Reagan administration, Feith helped to convince the [Joint Chiefs of Staff](#), Weinberger and [Secretary of State George Shultz](#) all to recommend against ratification of changes to the [Geneva Conventions](#). The changes, known as the [Additional Protocols](#), grant armed non-state actors [prisoner of war](#) status under certain circumstances even if they fail to distinguish themselves from the civilian population to the same extent as members of the armed forces of a high contracting party.^[7] Reagan informed the [United States Senate](#) in 1987 that he would not ratify Additional Protocol I. At the time, both the [Washington Post](#) and the [New York Times](#) editorialized in favor of Reagan's decision to reject Additional Protocol I as a revision of humanitarian law that protected terrorists.^{[8][9]}

Private practice [\[edit\]](#)


Feith began his career as an [attorney](#) in private practice with the law firm [Fried, Frank, Harris, Shriver &](#)

[Jacobson LLP](#) for 3 years, after which he joined the Reagan Administration (see previous section).

Upon leaving the Pentagon, Feith co-founded, with [Marc Zell](#), the Washington, DC law firm of Feith & Zell. The firm engaged in lobbying efforts for, among others, the Turkish, Israeli and Bosnian governments, in addition to representing defense corporations [Lockheed Martin](#) and [Northrop Grumman](#). Feith left the firm in 2001, following his nomination as Undersecretary of Defense for Policy.

Bush administration [\[edit\]](#)

Feith joined the administration of President [George W. Bush](#) as Undersecretary of Defense for Policy in 2001. His appointment was facilitated by connections he had with other [neoconservatives](#), including Richard Perle and [Paul Wolfowitz](#). With his new appointment in hand, Feith proved influential in having Richard Perle chosen as chairman of the Defense Policy Board.^[10] Feith was criticized during the first term of the Bush administration for creating the [Office of Strategic Influence](#). This office came into existence to support the [War on Terror](#). The office's aim was to influence policymakers by submitting biased news stories into the foreign media. Feith played a significant role in the build up to the [Iraq war](#).^[11] As part of his portfolio, he supervised the Pentagon [Office of Special Plans](#), a group of policy and intelligence analysts created to provide senior government officials with raw intelligence, unvetted by the intelligence community.^[12] The office, eventually dismantled, was later criticized in Congress and the media for analysis that was contradicted by CIA analysis and investigations performed following the [invasion of Iraq](#). General [Tommy Franks](#), who led both the [2001 invasion of Afghanistan](#) and the [Iraq War](#), once called Feith "the dumbest fucking guy on the planet."^{[13][14]}

In February 2007, the Pentagon's inspector general issued a [report](#)  that concluded that Feith's office "developed, produced, and then disseminated alternative intelligence assessments on the Iraq and [al Qaida](#) relationship, which included some conclusions that were inconsistent with the consensus of the Intelligence Community, to senior decision-makers." This repeated Feith's earlier involvement with [Team B](#) as a postgraduate, when alternative intelligence assessments exaggerating threats to the United States turned out to be wrong on nearly every point. The report found that these actions were "inappropriate" though not "illegal." Senator [Carl Levin](#), Chair of the Senate Armed Services Committee, stated that "The bottom line is that intelligence relating to the Iraq-al-Qaeda relationship was manipulated by high-ranking officials in the Department of Defense to support the administration's decision to invade Iraq. The inspector general's report is a devastating condemnation of inappropriate activities in the DOD policy office that helped take this nation to war."^[15] At Senator Levin's insistence, on April 6, 2007, the Pentagon's Inspector General's Report was declassified and released to the public.^[16]

Responding to criticism of a report that linked Al-Qaeda with Iraq under [Saddam Hussein](#), Feith called the office's report a much-needed critique of the CIA's intelligence. "It's healthy to criticize the CIA's intelligence", Feith said. "What the people in the Pentagon were doing was right. It was good government." Feith also rejected accusations he attempted to link Iraq to a formal relationship with Al Qaeda. "No one in my office ever claimed there was an operational relationship", Feith said. "There was a relationship."^[17] Feith stated that he "felt vindicated" by the report of the Pentagon inspector general.^[18] He told the Washington Post that his office produced "a criticism of the consensus of the intelligence community, and in

presenting it I was not endorsing its substance."^[15] Feith was the first senior Pentagon official to leave the administration after Bush was re-elected.^[10] There was some speculation when Feith announced he was leaving as to why he was stepping down. Some believed he was pressured to leave because of problems over his performance and his increasing marginalization.^[19]

Post-government career ^[edit]

Following his government service, Feith was employed by the [Edmund A. Walsh School of Foreign Service](#) at [Georgetown University](#), where he taught a course on the Bush administration's [anti-terrorism](#) policy. He came to [Georgetown's School of Foreign Service](#) after leaving [Stanford's Hoover Institution](#) and was appointed by School of Foreign Service Dean, Ambassador [Robert Gallucci](#).^[20] However, his hiring "caused an uproar among the Foreign Service school faculty." Two years later, Feith's contract was not renewed,^[1] causing continuing hostility between the Georgetown Law Center faculty and alumni and the Foreign Service school faculty.

Views and publications ^[edit]

Feith is a [Republican](#), and has contributed money to various party candidates over the years.^[21] Sympathetic to the [neoconservative](#) wing of the party, he has over the last 30 years published many works on U.S. [national security](#) policy. His work on US–Soviet [détente](#), [arms control](#) and [Arab–Israeli](#) issues generated considerable debate.^[citation needed] One of Feith's controversial views was his argument that increasing the number of political appointees equated to more democracy.^[10] Given that democracy involves those being represented choosing their representatives, this view seems to be self-contradictory.^[10]

Feith's writings on [international law](#) and on foreign and defense policy have appeared in *[The Wall Street Journal](#)*, *[Commentary](#)*, *[The New Republic](#)* and elsewhere. He has contributed chapters to a number of books, including James W. Muller's *[Churchill as Peacemaker](#)*, Raphael Israeli's *[The Dangers of a Palestinian State](#)* and Uri Ra'anani's *[Hydra of Carnage: International Linkages of Terrorism](#)*, as well as serving as co-editor for *[Israel's Legitimacy in Law and History](#)*.

Feith has long advocated a policy of "[peace through strength](#)". He was an outspoken skeptic of U.S.-Soviet [détente](#) and of the [Oslo](#), [Hebron](#) and [Wye](#) Processes on Palestinian-Israeli peace. In particular, he criticized the Oslo Accords and the [Camp David](#) peace agreement mediated by former President Carter between [Egypt](#) and Israel. In 1997, he published a lengthy article in *[Commentary](#)*, titled "A Strategy for Israel". In it, Feith argued that the Oslo Accords were being undermined by [Yasser Arafat](#)'s failure to fulfill peace pledges and Israel's failure to uphold the integrity of the accords it had concluded with Arafat. Furthermore, he was an opponent of the 1972 [Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty](#), the [International Criminal Court](#) and the [Chemical Weapons Convention](#) which he criticized as ineffective and dangerous to U.S. interests.

In 1998, Feith was one of [a number of U.S. officials](#) who signed an [open letter](#) to [President Bill Clinton](#) calling for the United States to oust [Saddam Hussein](#). Feith was part of a group of former national security officials in the 1990s who supported [Ahmad Chalabi](#) and the [Iraqi National Congress](#) and encouraged the

U.S. Congress to pass the [Iraq Liberation Act](#) of 1998. Congress approved the Act, and Clinton signed it into law.

Feith generally favors US support for Israel and has promoted US-Israeli cooperation. Along with [Richard Perle](#) and [David Wurmser](#), he was a member of the study group which authored a controversial report entitled *[A Clean Break: A New Strategy for Securing the Realm](#)*,^[22] a set of policy recommendations for the newly elected Israeli [prime minister](#), [Benjamin Netanyahu](#). The report was published by the Institute for Advanced Strategic and Political Studies without an individual author being named. According to the report, Feith was one of the people who participated in roundtable discussions that produced ideas that the report reflects. Feith pointed out in a September 16, 2004 letter to the editor of the *Washington Post* that he was not the co-author and did not clear the report's final text. He wrote, "There is no warrant for attributing any particular idea [in the report], let alone all of them, to any one participant."

Feith also served on the board of the [Jewish Institute for National Security Affairs](#) (JINSA), a think tank that promotes a military and strategic alliance between the United States and Israel.^[23] Feith was one of the eighteen founding members of the organization [One Jerusalem](#) to oppose the Oslo peace agreement. Its purpose is "saving a united [Jerusalem](#) as the undivided capital of Israel." He is also Director of [Foundation for Jewish Studies](#), which "offers in-depth study programs for the adult Washington Jewish community that cross denominational lines."

Feith was interviewed by the CBS news magazine *[60 Minutes](#)* in a segment that was aired on April 6, 2008.^[24] During this interview he promoted his newly released memoir, *[War and Decision](#)* and defended the decision making that led to the US invasion of Iraq in 2003.

War and Decision [edit]

Main article: [War and Decision](#)

On April 8, 2008, Feith's memoir, *[War and Decision: Inside the Pentagon at the Dawn of the War on Terrorism](#)*, was published by HarperCollins.

Possible investigation [edit]

Main article: [The Bush Six](#)

Feith is one of several Bush Administration officials under consideration for investigation of possible [war crimes](#) in a Spanish court, headed by [Baltasar Garzón](#) under claims of universal jurisdiction. The merits of starting an investigation are under review.^{[25][26][27][28][29][30][31]}


Footnotes [edit]

1.


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[a](#)

[b](#)

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2.

[^]

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3.


[^]

Goldberg, Jeffery (May 9, 2005). "A Little
16.

[^]


<http://levin.senate.gov/newsroom/supporting/2007/SI> PDF (5.38 MB)
17.

[^]

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Further reading

- *War and Decision: Ford Hall Forum Boston, MA October 23, 2008* a video of a talk by Douglas Feith 1hr and 42min.
- Maureen Dowd, "The Dream is Dead," The New York Times, 12 December 2007
- Vanity Fair editor Craig Unger on the development of the Office of Special Plans
- *Special Plans: the blogs on Douglas Feith and the faulty intelligence that led to war* by Allison Hantschel, Wilsonville, Oregon: William, James & Co., September 2005 ISBN 1-59028-049-0
- *Deadly Dogma: How Neoconservatives Broke the Law to Deceive America* by Smith, Grant F., Institute for Research: Middle Eastern Policy, 2006, ISBN 0-9764437-4-0.
- *Clear Ideas vs. Foggy Bottom* by Melanie Kirkpatrick, *The Wall Street Journal* August 5, 2003, p. A8.
- *White House Learned of Spy Probe in 2001* by Curt Anderson, *Associated Press*, September 3, 2004.
- *Chain of Command: The Road from 9/11 to Abu Ghraib* by Seymour Hersh, New York: Harper Collins. 2004. ISBN 0-06-019591-6.
- *Israel's Legitimacy in Law and History* Feith, Douglas J., et al.; ed. Siegel, Edward M.; assoc.ed. Barrekette, Olga; *Proceedings of the Conference on International Law and the Arab-Israeli Conflict* (New York, October 21, 1990), Sponsored by *The Louis D. Brandeis Society of Zionist Lawyers*, Center for Near East Policy Research, 1993, ISBN 0-9640145-0-5.
- *A Clean Break: A New Strategy for Securing the Realm* by David Wurmser, 1996
- *Plan of Attack* by Bob Woodward, New York: Simon & Schuster, 2004, ISBN 0-7432-5547-X.
- *A Dangerous Appointment: Profile of Douglas Feith, Undersecretary of Defense under Bush* by James J. Zogby, Middle East Information Center, April 18, 2001
- *Israeli Settlements: Legitimate, Democratically Mandated, Vital to Israel's Security and, Therefore, in U.S. Interest*, The Center for Security Policy, Transition Brief No. 96 T 130, December 17, 1996

External links

- Douglas Feith's personal website
- Douglas Feith biography, from *The Jewish Virtual Library*
- Profile: Douglas Feith a timeline of Feith's Iraq policies at Center for Cooperative Research

Government offices		
Preceded by Walter B. Slocombe	United States Department of Defense Under Secretary of Defense for Policy 2001–2005	Succeeded by Eric S. Edelman

Authority control	VIAF: 21362377  · ISNI: 0000 0000 6701 7692 
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- Categories:
- 1953 births

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American lawyers

American lobbyists

Central High School (Philadelphia) alumni

Georgetown University faculty

Harvard University alumni

Jewish American politicians

Living people

People from Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

United States Department of Defense officials

Reagan Administration personnel

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Pennsylvania Republicans

Pennsylvania Democrats

People from Cheltenham, Pennsylvania

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